



Senator Michael Gianaris
Deputy Majority Leader | 12th Senate District

Testimony of Senator Michael Gianaris, Deputy Majority Leader

New York City Public Housing Authority *Blueprint for Change: Transformation Plan*
December 28, 2020

I write to express my opposition to the rushed process being used to implement NYCHA's *Blueprint for Change: Transformation Plan* ("The Blueprint"). This plan was developed without sufficient input from NYCHA residents and creates too much uncertainty about the future of our public housing stock and how it would be managed. We can all agree that NYCHA has been failing to provide livable conditions and basic services to its residents, yet the desperation to do what is necessary to fix this injustice should not lead to the adoption of a plan that could make things worse if not developed properly.

The Blueprint seeks to establish a new governance and financial model – the Housing Preservation Trust. Most concerning, it remains unclear to whom this new entity would be accountable and how much public control would truly remain over NYCHA properties. NYCHA's financial future would also remain unclear, with vague proposals about energy and general savings that do not make clear they would improve the lives of residents, address the impending challenges of climate change, or enhance the agency's credit-worthiness.

Public involvement in the planning process has been extremely difficult, given the ongoing covid-19 pandemic limiting in-person meetings, tours, testimony, and other more typical engagement efforts. The people most impacted by the proposed changes are the people most left out of the planning process. Feedback is not being heard in a clear, meaningful fashion — a critique I have heard repeatedly from concerned tenants, who have been unable to ask significant questions of NYCHA leadership and are often provided with either dense policy documents or superficial slideshows.

Too many questions surrounding this vague proposal could lead to a deleterious result for New Yorkers. The Trust leaves questions about how much public control will remain over these developments. The financial plan leaves questions about new revenue sources. The reference to energy savings leaves questions about the effect of any such initiatives on the urgent need to combat climate change. And perhaps worst of all, the process used to solicit public input has been hopelessly flawed, cutting out the opinions of those who would be most affected by these changes — the NYCHA residents themselves, who often do not have access to the technology required to respond to your virtual process.

Accordingly, I must express my opposition to moving forward with The Blueprint proposal unless and until the above concerns are addressed.